Meghan McArdle

ISTC 301

Virtual Field Trips

The virtual field trip experience opens students to a much more massive, accessible world of information. Students can get an up-close look at images, documents, and videos that relay information about other places, people, and/or times. On the New Bedford, Massachusetts page, for example, students could click through a variety of categories and specific tales, while being immersed in a given background audio that reflected the information or period of the online exhibit. I feel that virtual field trips would be great tools to accompany and expand on lessons, giving visual details to support content. For example, I am currently designing a unit plan that explores natural disasters including volcanic eruptions. One site that I found (<http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/pompeii/interactive/interactive.html>) allows students to learn about volcanoes around the world, their different types, what they look like inside, and to experiment with building (and erupting) their own volcano. This is an opportunity that students would not be able to do in person, especially if they are from Maryland and do not have a nearby volcano to visit. Essentially, students would be able to add context to information, and could further explore given sites either at home or in a local library. Unfortunately, the virtual field trip has its limitations. It is not a comprehensive replacement for the tangible experience of traveling somewhere, talking directly to different people, and maybe physically participating in related activities.